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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 447-4330
Letter No. 2523 Sept. 13, 1991

EXTENDING SHELF LIFE -- USDA scientists have patented two methods for extending the shelf life of raw fruits, vegetables & juices. The first method is a time-release system that keeps raw fruits & vegetables from turning brown, says co-inventor **Kevin B. Hicks**. The second method relies on similar browning inhibitors that use a "molecular shield" to protect fruit & vegetable juices from the browning process. **Contact: Kevin Hicks or Gerald Sapers (215) 233-6579.**

LOOKING FOR THE SALMONELLA LINK -- During its first year of operation, USDA's Salmonella Task Force has traced 29 cases of Salmonella food poisoning associated with eggs back to the farms where shell eggs are produced. "Grade A shell eggs have been implicated in some recent cases of Salmonella poisoning," says **John Mason**, director of the Salmonella Task Force. Apprehending Salmonella that have contaminated fresh eggs requires an involved investigation because many things can happen to an egg from the time a hen produces it until a consumer eats it. **Contact: Amichai Heppner (301) 436-5222.**

AFRICANIZED HONEYBEE: A NEW CHALLENGE -- Practically indistinguishable from its European cousins, Africanized honeybees are migrating into the United States along the Texas-Mexico border. It is difficult to predict how far north Africanized honeybees will move in the U.S., USDA scientists say. Although the Africanized honeybees' northernmost location on North America's east coast is south Texas, on Mexico's west coast, the bees are still about 1,000 miles south of San Diego near Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. **Contacts: Doug Hendrix** (regulatory program details) (301) 436-7255; **Kim Kaplan** (research info) (301) 344-4504; **Tom Willis** (beekeeper & extension info) (202) 447-2332.

WETLANDS VIDEO -- USDA has a 23-minute videotape that shows farmers the advantages of wetlands on a farm. "**The Wealth in Wetlands**" features interviews with farmers from California, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota & New York. The video, which is narrated by actor **Leslie Nielsen**, shows wetland restoration techniques & provides sources of help for wetland restoration & conservation. Copies are available for loan from local Soil Conservation Service offices. Copies may also be purchased. **Contact: Chris Larson (202) 447-3608.**

PISTACHIO CROP DOWN -- The 1991 California pistachio crop will be down this year. USDA is forecasting production at 48 million pounds (in shell), which is down 59 percent from last year's record high. The large decrease is primarily due to the alternate bearing cycle of the pistachio crop. **Contact: Kevin Hintzman (202) 447-5412.**

CHINESE PIGS PASS TASTE TEST -- Pork from Chinese swine is just as tasty as meat from American pigs, USDA scientists report. "You can sum it up in one sentence: There's no difference between the taste of Chinese pork and domestic pork," says USDA meat scientist **Tommy L. Wheeler**. The scientists are working to combine increased litter size from Chinese swine with the growth & meat production of domestic breeds. A trained sensory panel found no difference when chops from the four breed cross groups were tested for juiciness, amount of connective tissue, flavor intensity or tenderness, Wheeler says.
Contact: Tommy L. Wheeler (402) 762-4229.

HORTICULTURAL PRODUCTS UP -- For the first nine months of fiscal year 1991, U.S. horticultural exports were up 10 percent over the same period last year, to just over \$4 billion. For June, U.S. horticultural sales exceeded the exports of all other ag sectors, including wood products, feed grains, livestock, oilseed products, cotton & tobacco.
Contact: Mark Thompson (202) 447-6877.

EYES HAVE IT -- A higher intake of vitamin C helps protect against developing cataracts. That's what epidemiological studies by USDA scientists & others have found in the past. These findings are now more compelling because of direct evidence from a new study that shows higher intakes of this antioxidant vitamin lead to higher vitamin C levels both in the lenses of the eyes, where cataracts develop, and in the fluid that nourishes the lens. In the study, 42 patients were tested. Half received a placebo. Half got an extra two grams of vitamin C. "We saw significant differences between the two groups in the amount of ascorbic acid in their blood plasma, lenses, and aqueous humor fluid," says researcher **Allen Taylor**.
Contact: Allen Taylor (617) 556-3155.

WALNUT CROP AT RECORD HIGH -- The 1991 California walnut production will be a record high 250,000 tons (in shell) -- a level 10 percent above last year and 1 percent above the previous record high of 247,000 tons set in 1987. The quality of this year's walnut crop is adversely affected by sunburn & blight. Sizes are expected to be smaller than usual. Nut set is 15 percent higher than last year & about the same as the 1987 set. **Contact: Kevin Hintzman** (202) 447-4215.

COMPOSTED SLUDGE MAY HELP prevent lead poisoning in children who play in & then eat lead-contaminated soil, as well as people who eat crops grown in lead-contaminated home gardens. USDA agronomist **Rufus Chaney** is working with the Environmental Protection Agency to find out if steps taken to clean lead from soil correlate with lower blood-lead levels in children. The study is being done in Baltimore, Boston & Cincinnati. **Contact: Rufus L. Chaney** (301) 344-3324.

<p><i>Editor: Marci Hilt Phone: (202) 447-6445</i></p>

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1788 -- Flowers are generally thought of as strictly decorative, but now there is a growing demand for them as food items. **Maria Bynum** has a flowery report. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1270 -- Two not-so-nice spiders; coping with yellow jackets; protecting our food supply; do you have "chemophobia;" corn as a deicer. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1778 -- USDA News Highlights; help for Albania's farmers; advice on farm-stored grain; 1991 farm income; banning parathion. (Weekly reel of news features.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Wed., Sept. 18, sugar & sweeteners outlook, cattle on feed; Thurs., Sept. 19, fruit/nut outlook, catfish production; Fri., Sept. 20, U.S. ag outlook, ag trade update; Mon., Sept. 23, ag resources outlook (land, water & conservation), livestock/poultry update; Tues., Sept. 24, crop/weather update, poultry production; Wed., Sept. 25, aquaculture outlook; citrus fruit production; Thurs., Sept. 26, world tobacco situation. **(These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newslines carry many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.)**

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.

Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

FEATURES -- **Pat O'Leary** reports on USDA's ranking of the top ten farm exporting states in 1990; **DeBoria Janifer** on USDA research on exercise & the elderly.

ACTUALITIES -- Secretary of Agriculture **Edward Madigan** on the national school lunch program & other topics; USDA meteorologist **Norton Strommen** with a crop & weather update; USDA economist **Bob Dubman** on farm income & finance; USDA economist **Mary Madell** on Western Europe.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- **Pat O'Leary** reports on USDA's fall color hotline; **DeBoria Janifer** reports on USDA's national school lunch program.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- **Agriculture Update**, five minutes of USDA farm program information in "news desk" format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Westar 4, Transponder 12D (Channel 23), audio 6.2 or 6.8: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:45 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:45 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

TOO LITTLE TOO LATE...is the way **Kelly Lenz** (WIBW/Kansas Ag Network, Topeka, Kan.) characterized rainfall in his region. Kelly brought together on his program four county agents to review the moisture situation. Farmers using irrigation produced a crop, but dry land production was down considerably.

FARM SAFETY...at harvest time has been featured on several programs produced by **Judy Stratman** (WNAX, Yankton, S.D.). Judy has also covered recommendations by university extension personnel to reduce chemical use on farms. They note benefits from reduced use, including lower costs & less potential for groundwater contamination, but it also requires improved management to control pests & weeds.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE TOUR...of a local farm is being covered by **Ernest Bartholomew** (KLNT, Clinton, Iowa). The farm features no chemicals, open pollinated corn & sells cattle, hogs & poultry to retail markets. Bart will look at methods and results.

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CONGRATULATIONS...to **Roy Battles** (WLW, Cincinnati, Ohio, retired) inducted to the Ohio Agricultural Council's Agricultural Hall of Fame. The honor was presented at the Ohio State Fair and recognizes Roy's service as a farm broadcaster, extension agent, speech writer & public relations specialist.

MOVED...**Hugh Robinson** from KKOW, Pittsburg, Kans., to Colorado Farm and Ranch Radio Network, Brush, Colo., as general manager & farm director; (303) 842-5005. **Mark Vail** from Kansas Agriculture Network, Topeka, Kans., to a new FM station in St. Joseph, Mo., KSJQ; (816) 233-8881.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR...for the 47th annual convention of the National Association of Farm Broadcasters, Nov. 13-17 at the Westin Crown Center in Kansas City, Mo. Plan to stop by the USDA booth in the exhibit hall and say "hi."

VIC POWELL

Chief, Radio & TV Division